

## New Mexico Supreme Court General Rules

### 23-113. Providing court information to self-represented litigants.

A. **Self-represented litigant, court staff; defined.** For purposes of this rule, a self-represented litigant is any person who appears, or is contemplating an appearance, in any court in this state without attorney representation and court staff includes all judicial branch employees except judges, settlement facilitators, and mediators.

B. **Permitted information.** When communicating with a self-represented litigant, court staff are permitted to:

- (1) encourage the self-represented litigant to obtain legal advice from a licensed New Mexico attorney without recommending a specific attorney;
- (2) provide information about available pro bono, free or low-cost civil legal services, legal aid programs and lawyer referral services without endorsing a specific service;
- (3) provide information about available statutory or court-approved forms, pleadings and instructions without providing advice or recommendations as to any specific course of action;
- (4) answer questions about what information is being requested on forms without providing the self-represented litigant with the specific words to put in a form;
- (5) provide, orally or in writing, definitions of legal terminology from widely accepted legal dictionaries or other dictionaries, if available, and without advising whether a particular definition is applicable to the self-represented litigant's situation;
- (6) provide, orally or in writing, citations to constitutions, statutes, administrative rules or regulations, court rules and case law, but are not required to search for the citation and are not permitted to perform legal research as defined in Subparagraph (4) of Paragraph C of this rule or advise whether a particular provision is applicable to the self-represented litigant's situation;
- (7) provide publically available, non-sequestered information on docketed cases;
- (8) provide general information about court processes, procedures and practices, including court schedules and how to get matters scheduled;
- (9) provide information about mediation, parenting courses, courses for children of divorcing parents and any other appropriate information approved by the court for self-represented litigants;
- (10) provide, orally or in writing, information on local court rules and administrative orders;
- (11) provide information regarding proper courtroom conduct and decorum; and
- (12) provide general information about community resources without endorsing a specific resource.

- C. **Prohibited information.** When communicating with a self-represented litigant, court staff are prohibited from:
- (1) providing, orally or in writing, any interpretation or application of legal terminology, constitutional provisions, statutory provisions, administrative rules or regulations, court rules and case law based on specific facts or the self-represented litigant's particular circumstances;
  - (2) providing, orally or in writing, information that must be kept confidential by statute, administrative rule or regulation, court rule, court order or case law;
  - (3) creating documents or filling in the blanks on forms on behalf of self-represented litigants;
  - (4) performing direct legal research by applying the law to specific facts or expressing an opinion regarding the applicability of any constitutional provisions, statutes, administrative rules or regulations, court rules, court orders or case law to the self-represented litigant's particular circumstances;
  - (5) explaining court orders or decisions except as permitted by Subparagraph (8) of Paragraph B of this rule;
  - (6) telling the self-represented litigant what to say in court;
  - (7) assisting or participating in any unauthorized or inappropriate communications with a judge on behalf of the self-represented litigant outside the presence of the other party;
  - (8) indicating, orally or in writing, whether the self-represented litigant should file a case in court;
  - (9) predicting the outcome of a case filed in court; and
  - (10) indicating, orally or in writing, what the self-represented litigant should do or needs to do.

D. **Immunity.** Despite any information provided to self-represented litigants pursuant to this rule, self-represented litigants remain responsible for conducting themselves in an appropriate manner before the court and representing themselves in compliance with all applicable constitutional and statutory provisions, administrative rules or regulations, court rules, court orders and case law. Court staff shall be immune from suit, as provided by statute or common law, for any information provided to a self-represented litigant.